

STATEWIDE EMPLOYEE EXIT SURVEY

Hayley Hohman, M.A.

July 2019



OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT





Table of contents

Introduction	4
Background	4
Changes to the 2019 survey	4
Exit survey participation	5
Analysis	6
Why are they leaving?	6
Where are they going?	7
Added value employer	8
Engagement	9
Conclusion	10
Recommendations	10
Upcoming changes for next year	10
Appendices	11
Appendix A: Satisfaction	12
Appendix B: Respondent demographics	13



Introduction

BACKGROUND

Skilled and engaged employees are the asset that drives organizational success. An important goal for any employer is to keep valued employees. If employees are leaving, figuring out why is crucial. A thoughtful exit interview process can provide feedback for workplace improvement.

Governor Christine Gregoire created the Statewide Exit Survey in 2012 to learn more about why employees choose to leave executive branch agencies. The exit survey allows agencies to develop retention strategies and improve workforce management.

The Office of Financial Management State Human Resources administers the survey and provides the link only to executive branch agencies (excluding higher education). Participating agencies provide the survey link to their voluntarily departing employees. This report uses

Who is eligible for the Statewide Exit Survey?

Voluntarily departing employees are eligible. This includes those leaving state service or moving to another Washington state agency.

Retirements, layoffs, dismissals and non-permanent separations are not included.

responses from state fiscal year 2019 (July 2018 through June 2019).

CHANGES TO THE 2019 EXIT SURVEY

Researchers established new criteria for responses and removed incomplete and nonresponsive answers from analysis and response rates.

- Incomplete: the response is complete only if the respondent indicates what their primary reason for leaving is. This question is the core of the survey, and without it, researchers are missing a key data point.
- Nonresponsive: answers do not make sense or do not seem as they came from an eligible employee.

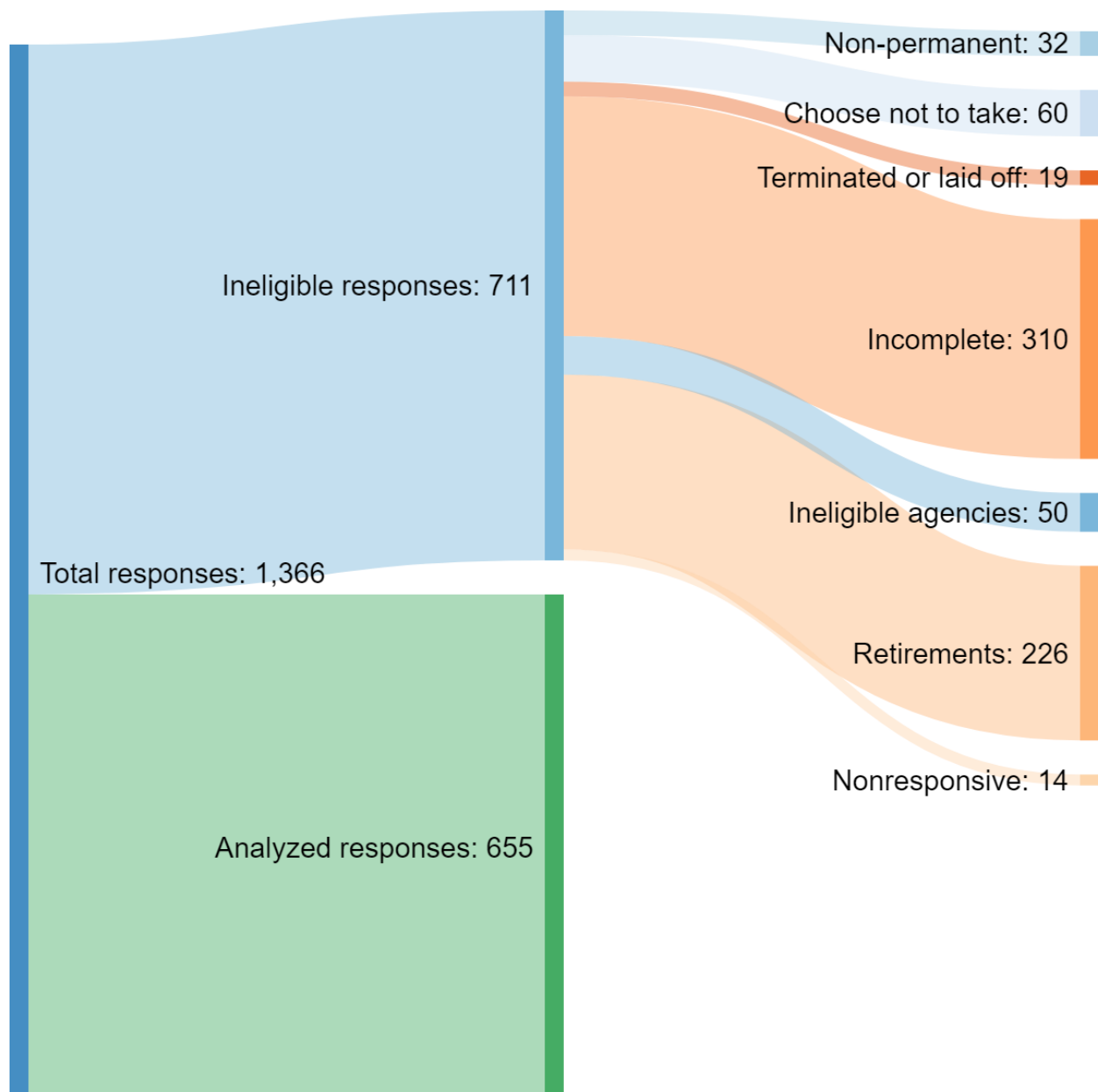
Higher standards for data will increase the validity of findings and more accurately represent workforce trends.

EXIT SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Researchers define agencies with at least one survey response as participating. In state fiscal year 2019, 63 executive branch agencies had employees leave and 38 of these agencies had at least one exit survey response. This results in an agency participation rate of 60 percent.

Response rates are lower for exit surveys when compared to other surveys. This may be because some employees feel uncomfortable responding. During this reporting period, 654 departing employees completed the exit survey. The response rate is 25 percent for participating agencies. Twenty participating agencies had a response rate within the expected range for exit surveys, which is 20 percent.

Figure 1: Survey responses received, sorted by eligibility

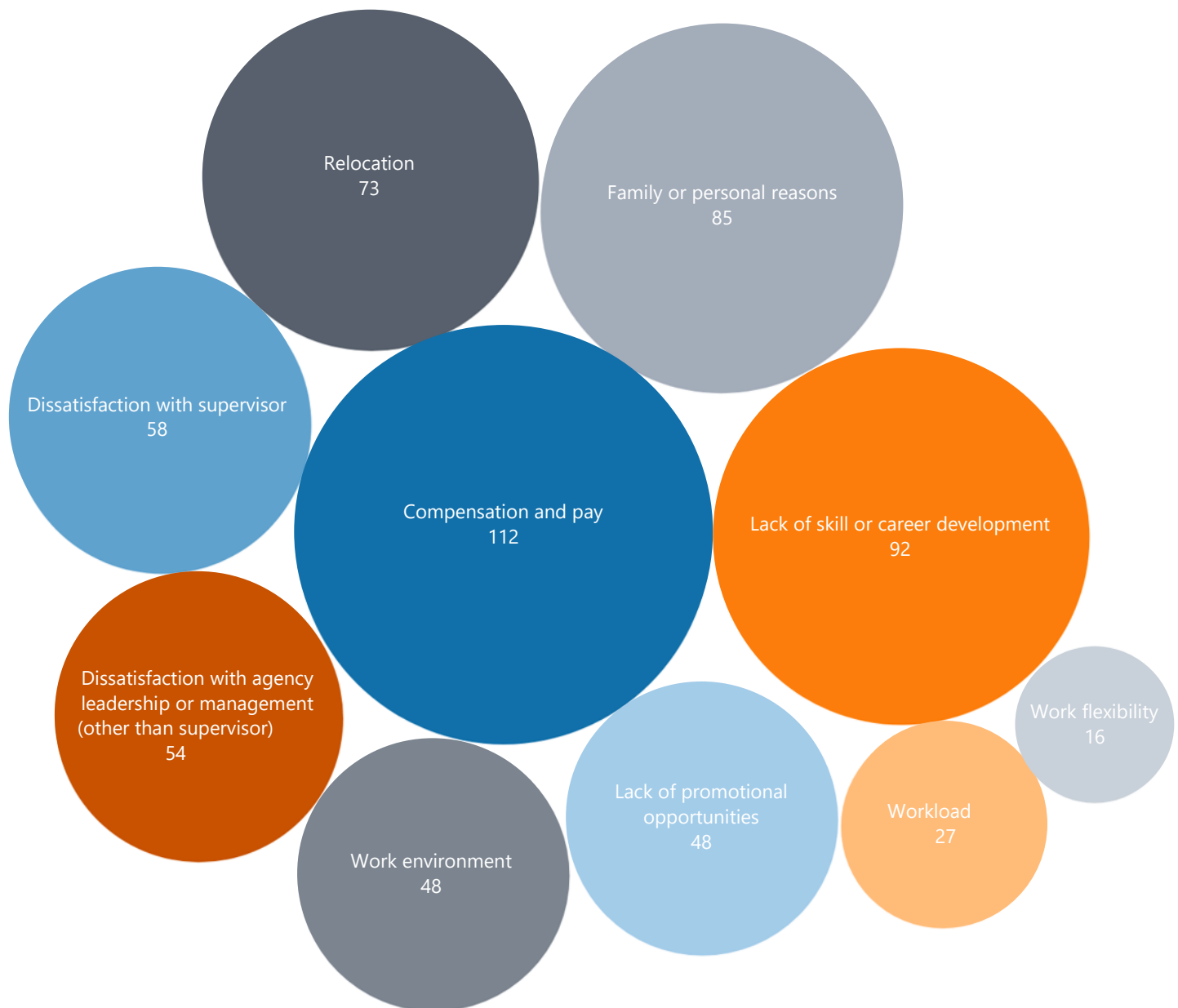


Analysis

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?

Survey respondents rank their top three reasons for leaving. Compensation and pay was the most frequent first reason for leaving, with skill or career development a close second. The next group includes family or personal reasons and relocation.

Figure 2: Top reasons for leaving

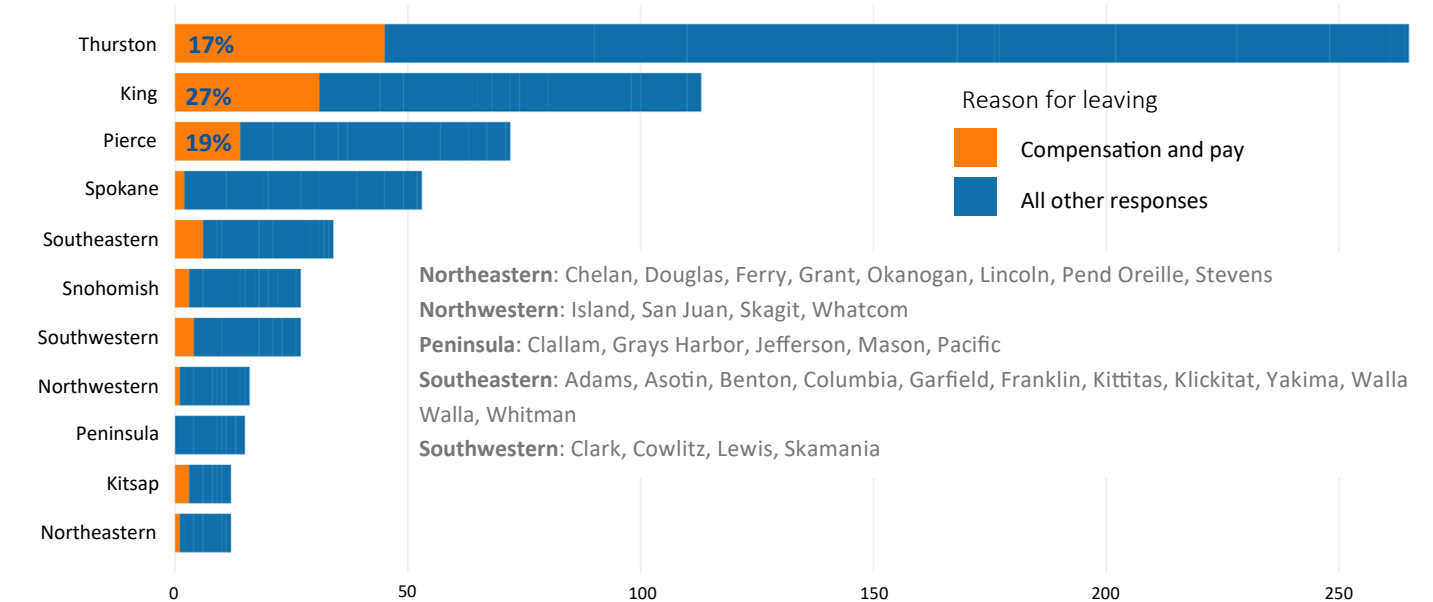


Excluded due to relatively low observations: Commute (N=8), To Reduce Effects of Layoff (N=4).

King County has the highest percentage of employees leaving due to compensation. Thurston County employees were more likely to list skill or career development as their primary reason.

Most departing employees (73 percent) report their expected income to increase by at least 5 percent in their new position. Employees located by the I-5 corridor (but south of Snohomish County) appeared more likely to receive raises with their new job. A common perception is employees leave due to a long commute, but the data suggest they are leaving instead for higher pay.

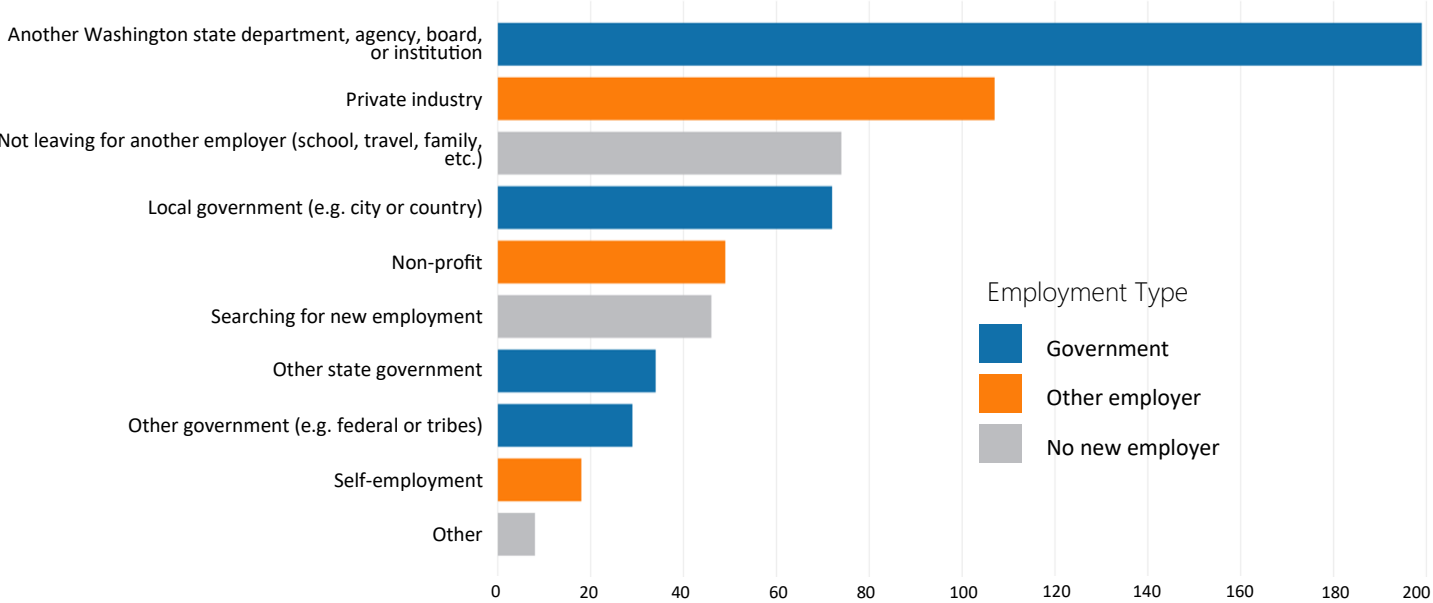
Figure 3: Compensation as a top reason for leaving by county



WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

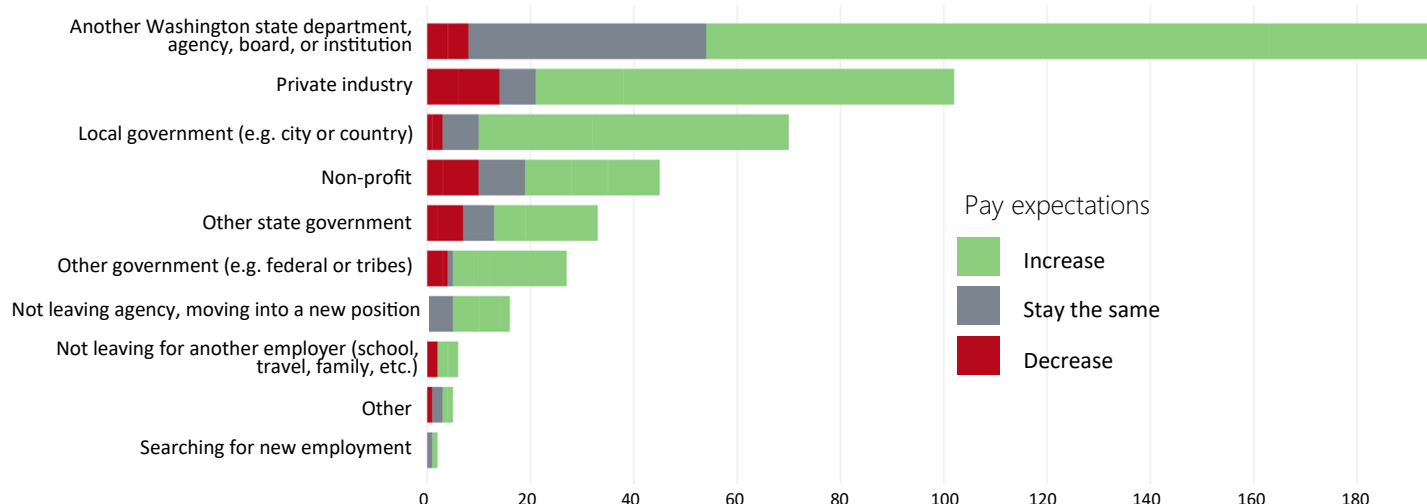
Other Washington state agencies continue to be the most common destination for respondents. Compared to total departures, employees going to another agency were more likely to respond to the survey. Employees were more likely to leave for private industry than local government. The remaining 20 percent are not leaving for another employer.

Figure 4: Departure destination



The statewide exit survey started due to concerns state employees were moving to local governments. While both local government and private industry tend to pay departing employees more, higher numbers of employees are going to private industry.

Figure 5: Pay expectation by departure destination



ADDED VALUE EMPLOYER

Retaining employees is not the only measure of a good employer. Developing the careers and skills of employees are also victories. Researchers summarize this as an “added value employer.” This is measured by fond memories of the employer, skill development that makes them a lucrative candidate or willingness to return to the agency after acquiring experience elsewhere.

Departing employees were split on their likeliness to recommend their former agency for a friend or colleague. Sixty-six percent of departing employees do not see themselves

returning to the agency. A large portion, 37 percent, were actively recruited by their new employer. This may mean that Washington agencies are preparing competitive professionals that are highly valued in the job market.

Key Findings

- If employees are leaving, they will likely experience an increase in pay with their new job. However, many departing for another state agency may have the same level of compensation.
- Most people leave for the same or higher level of responsibilities. Both of these groups will likely experience an increase in pay.
- Employees in King County are the most likely to depart because of compensation and pay.
- The private industry is a bigger competitor for Washington state executive branch agencies than local government.

Figure 6: Changes to responsibilities and compensation

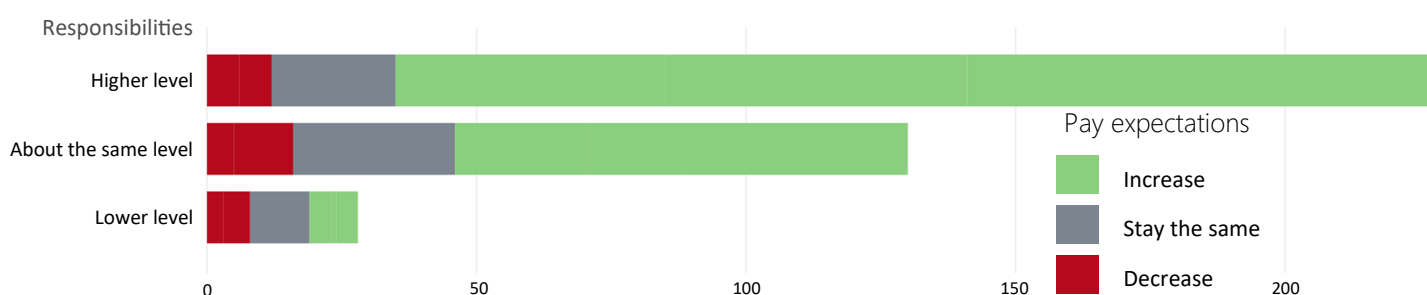
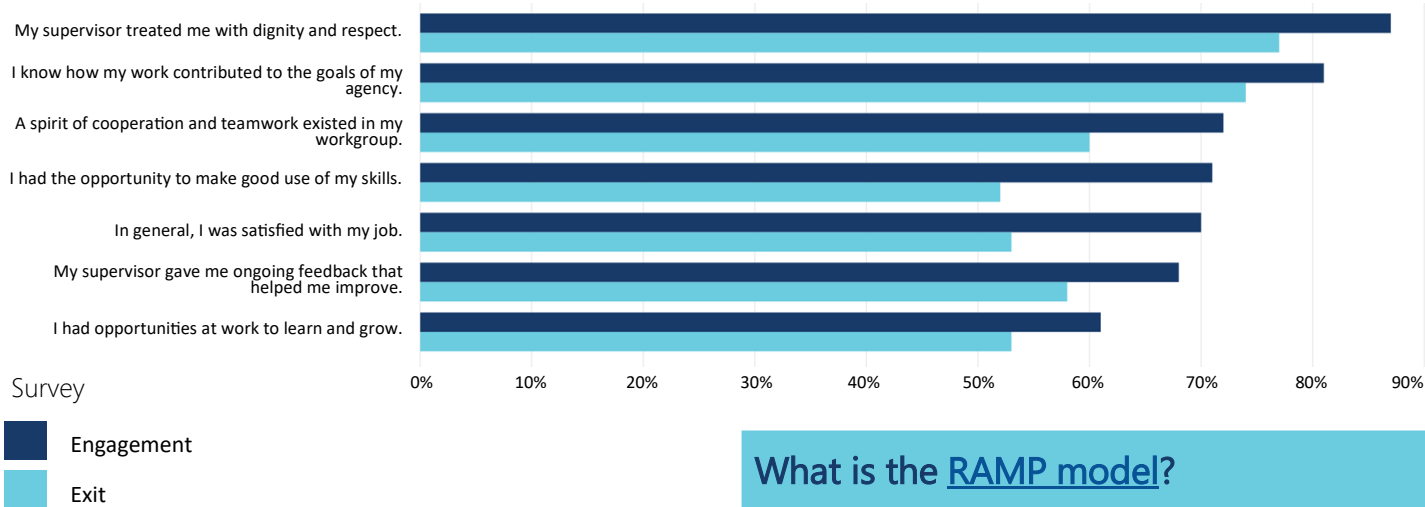


Figure 7: Engagement questions with significant differences between the Engagement Survey and Exit Survey



Engagement responses that are not statistically significant and not pictured:

I received recognition for a job well done.

We made improvements to make things better for our customers.

I had the opportunity to give input on decisions affecting my work.

I was encouraged to come up with better ways of doing things.

We used customer feedback to improve our work processes.

What is the RAMP model?

There are four aspects employees need to be engaged:

- **Relationships:** the drive to feel respected and connected.
- **Autonomy:** the drive for freedom and discretion.
- **Mastery:** the drive to learn and grow.
- **Purpose:** the drive for meaning.

HOW DO EXIT SURVEY RESPONSES COMPARE TO THE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY?

The exit survey contains several questions from the State Employee Engagement Survey. Differences between current and departing employees may offer insight. Responses to the [2018 State Employee Engagement Survey](#) were generally more positive than those from the exit survey. For example, job satisfaction was 70 percent for current employees and 52 percent for departing employees.

The greatest difference was in job and skills alignment. There is a 19 percent difference between current and departing employees. The engagement survey shows that this area highly correlates with job satisfaction. This difference also shows the importance of the RAMP model (specifically Mastery) to the employee. The engagement questions with statistically significant differences in responses can be mapped to all aspects of the RAMP model. Agencies should use a varied approach in improving engagement for their employees.

Figure 8: Largest significant differences between the Engagement Survey and Exit Survey

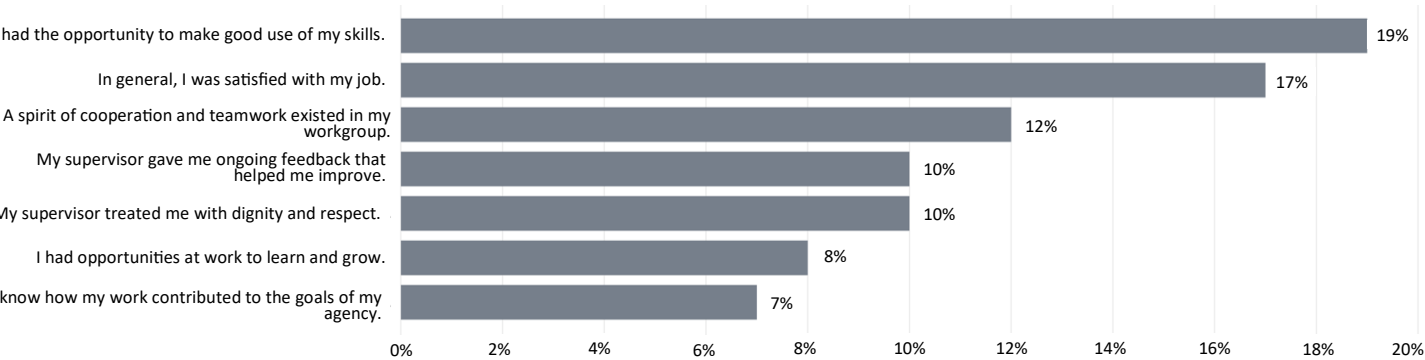


Figure 9: What could this organization have done to keep you as an employee?



Conclusion

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promoting the exit survey is important! More responses result in better data, which means OFM will provide more data-driven recommendations and best practices to agencies.

- **Include employees outside of Thurston County** in engagement and retention efforts.
- **Focus on the supervisor relationship.** Make sure supervisors are empowering their employees to do their job, not keeping them from performing at their highest skill level.
- **Skill and career development.** Employees like to learn and grow. Agencies should provide opportunities to help employees succeed.

And last of all, do not always view departing employees as a negative. If a departing, high-performing employee is leaving but was satisfied with their job, your agency played an important part in developing their career. This is something to celebrate!

UPCOMING CHANGES FOR NEXT YEAR

The Statewide Employee Exit Survey will look different in fiscal year 2020. State HR cleaned and simplified the language, along with making the following changes:

- Added questions to determine survey eligibility
- Added “100% field work or telecommuting” as a location option
- Added reasons for leaving: health/safety, career change, and emotional burnout
- For reasons for leaving, expanded dissatisfaction with leadership to include management
- Updating engagement survey questions
- Updating demographics based on the Engagement Survey and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion recommendations
- Updated age brackets to match those in HRMS

These updates mirror the data from HRMS and the Statewide Employee Engagement Survey, allowing State HR to compare exit survey data with these sources.



Appendices

Appendix A: Satisfaction

	1-Low	2	3	4	5-High
Health insurance	3% (N=18)	4% (N=24)	14% (N=84)	34% (N=207)	45% (N=269)
Paid time off	2% (N=13)	4% (N=23)	13% (N=80)	30% (N=183)	51% (N=307)
Pension plan and retirement	2% (N=13)	5% (N=27)	17% (N=105)	37% (N=221)	39% (N=233)
Pay	14% (N=83)	18% (N=112)	34% (N=206)	24% (N=143)	10% (N=62)
Fair and reasonable workload	14% (N=82)	14% (N=84)	23% (N=142)	29% (N=175)	20% (N=122)
Coworkers	6% (N=37)	10% (N=63)	20% (N=119)	28% (N=168)	36% (N=223)
Quality of supervision	13% (N=78)	14% (N=84)	16% (N=101)	22% (N=132)	35% (N=213)
Quality of agency leadership	16% (N=95)	16% (N=100)	22% (N=134)	20% (N=124)	26% (N=156)
Work flexibility (work/life balance)	9% (N=54)	11% (N=67)	21% (N=126)	24% (N=145)	35% (N=216)
Training and development opportunities	13% (N=81)	15% (N=91)	25% (N=151)	26% (N=159)	21% (N=128)
Job security	6% (N=36)	5% (N=28)	14% (N=86)	29% (N=174)	46% (N=282)
Work environment	15% (N=91)	10% (N=59)	26% (N=155)	23% (N=142)	26% (N=161)
Safety	8% (N=47)	7% (N=39)	16% (N=97)	27% (N=164)	42% (N=258)

Appendix B: Respondent demographics

Figure 10: Age of respondents

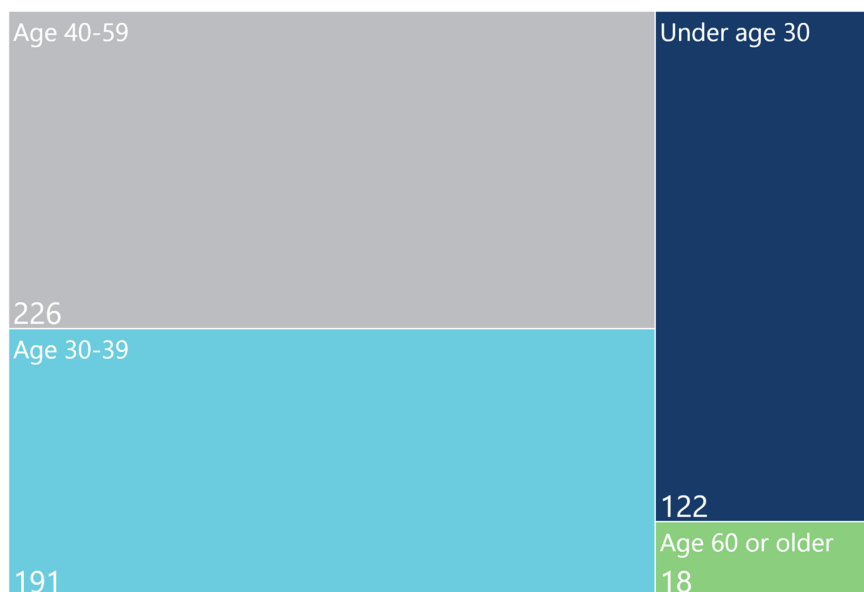
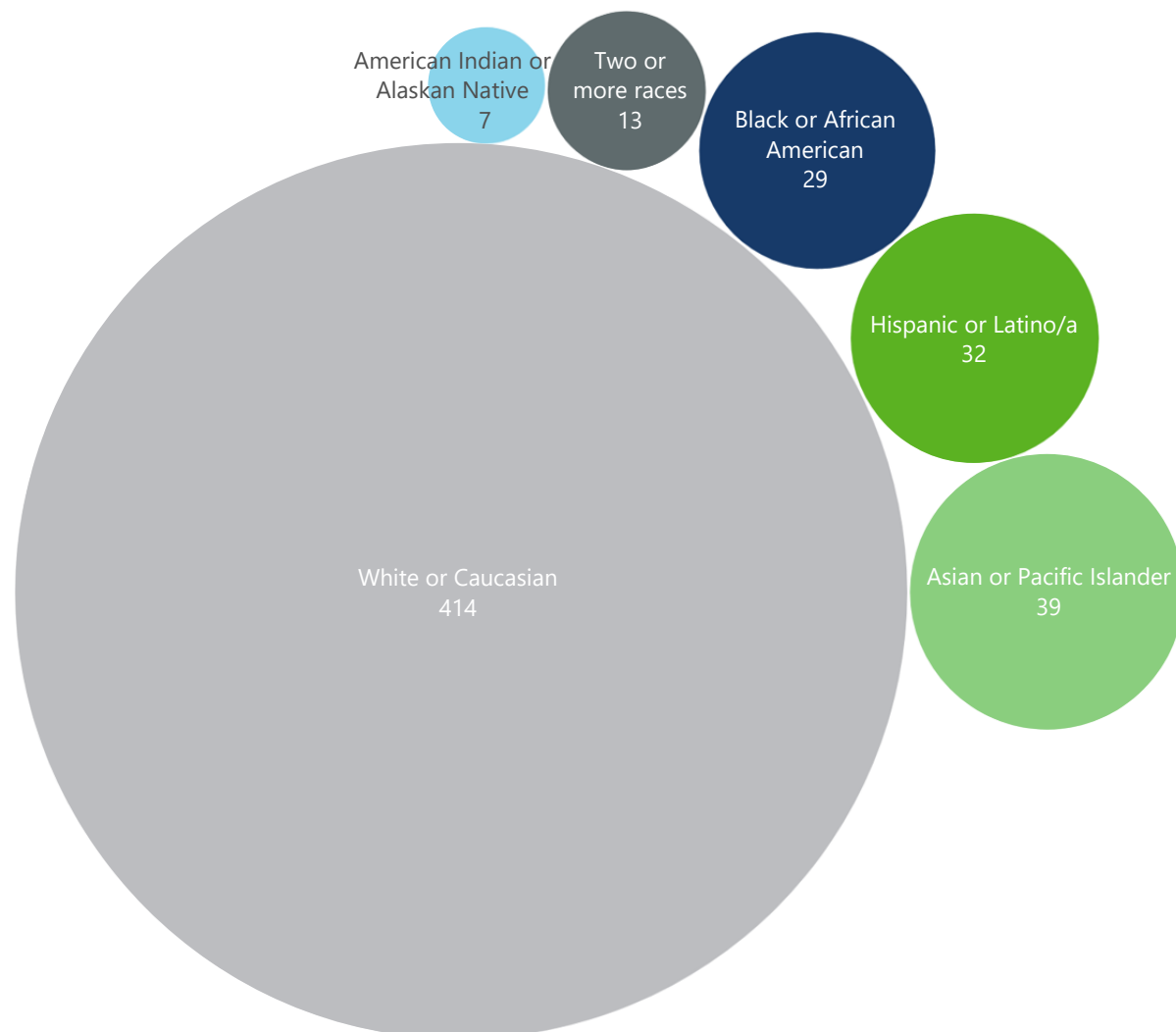


Figure 11: Race and ethnicity of respondents



Appendix B: Respondent demographics (continued)

Figure 12: Agency tenure of respondents

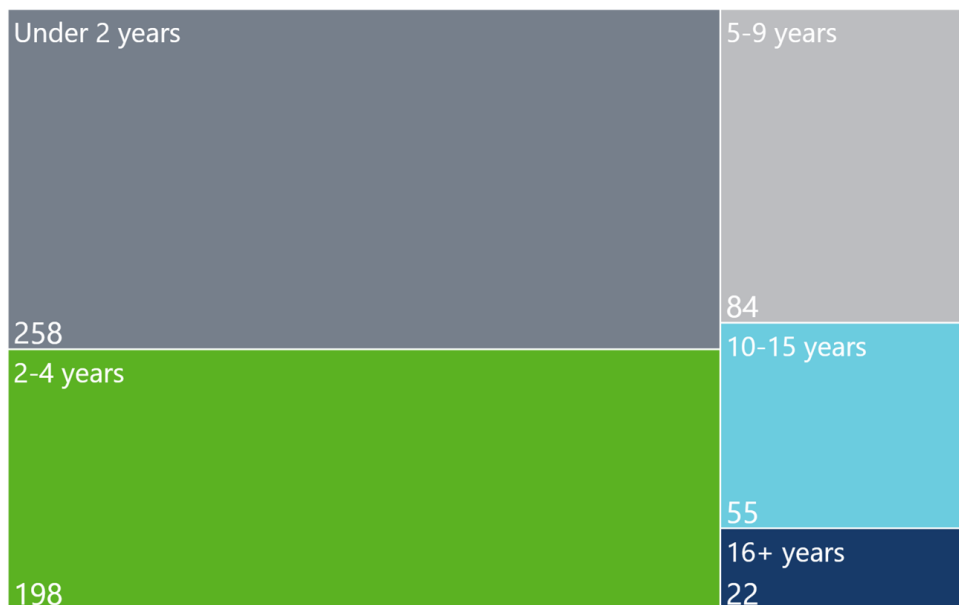


Figure 13: State tenure of respondents

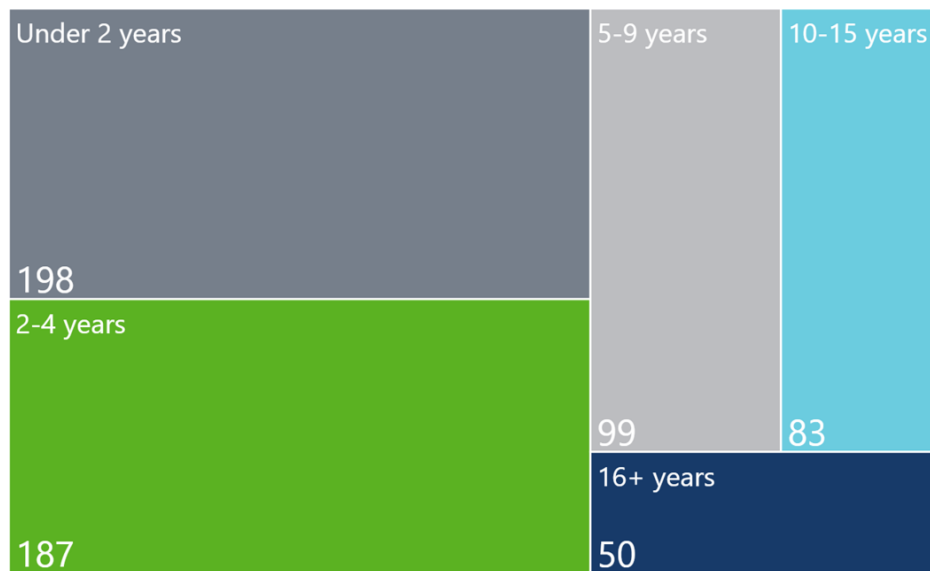


Figure 14: Respondents leaving supervisory positions

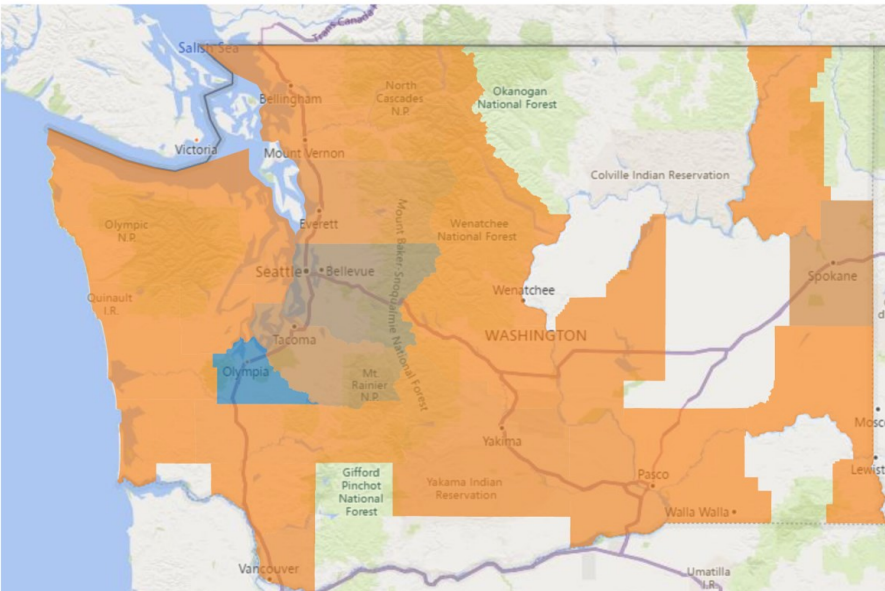


Appendix B: Respondent demographics (continued)

Figure 15: Respondents who are veterans



Figure 16: Respondents by location



County	Number of respondents
Thurston	265
King	113
Pierce	72
Spokane	53
Snohomish	27
Clark	17
Yakima	13
Benton	12
Kitsap	12
Skagit	9
Grant	7
Lewis	7
Whatcom	7
Clallam	5
Mason	4
100% field work or telecommuting	3
Cowlitz	3
Kittitas	3
Pacific	3
Stevens	3
Asotin	2
Chelan	2
Grays Harbor	2
Walla Walla	2
Franklin	1
Jefferson	1
Out of state	1
Whitman	1
Total	650
	15